133A

133C

THE OSWALD PHOTO FILE

Ex-officer's role raises questions about pictures

By Ray LaFontaine
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DALLAS — When Lee Harvey Oswald, accused assassin of President John F. Kennedy, was shown snapshots of himself holding the murder weapon, he said they were fakes.

Assassination theorists have, since Kennedy's Nov. 22, 1963, murder, tried to substantiate Oswald's claim of photo fakery. Among them is Oliver Stone in his movie *JFK*, which concludes that a massive conspiracy among the intelligence and industrial communities was behind the president's death.

Those efforts have come up short, but now a former Dallas Police Department officer and crime scene search photographer admits to his direct involvement in the staging of and darkroom manipulation of assassination-related photos housed in the Dallas Archives.

While the former police officer's admission does not discredit the snapshots, it does raise questions about what the law enforcement community was doing in the days following the assassination and what was and was not given to the Warren Commission.

Bobby G. Brown, retired and living in Oklahoma, says his work was done at the request of the U.S. Secret Service, the FBI and then-Dallas Police Capt. Will Fritz, head of the homicide

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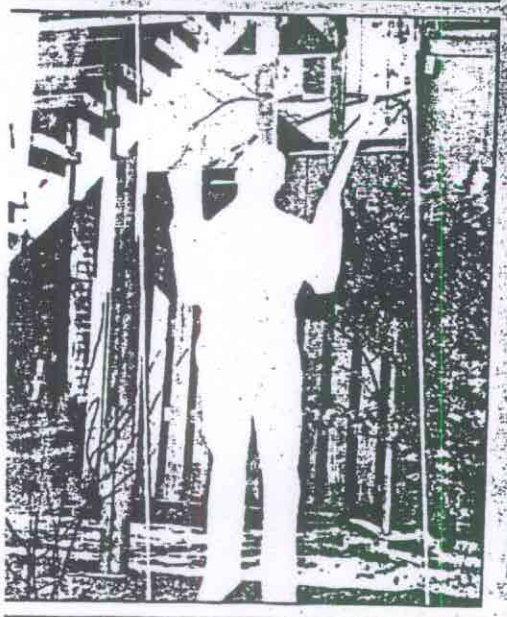
SILHOUETTE OF 133C



EXPLAINING THE PHOTOS

133A —This photo of Lee Harvey Oswald appeared on the cover of Life Magazine in 1964. Seen by millions of people, it was reproduced from one of two snapshots taken by Oswald's wife Marina in March 1963 that shows him holding the Mannlicher-Carcano rifle the Warren Commission said he used to kill President John F. Kennedy. The snapshot (known as 133A and which Oswald said was faked) was a critical piece of evidence in the commission's finding of Oswald's guilt.

133C —Seen by substantially fewer people, and not all by the Warren Commission, is this picture of Oswald in the same Dallas backyard setting but with a slightly different pose. Known as 133C, it first surfaced on Nov. 29, 1963, a week to the day following Kennedy's death, when then-Dallas Police Officer Bobby G. Brown says he was given it by U.S. Secret Service agent Forrest Sorrels. This photo, larger than the two snapshots Marina Oswald said she took of her husband, disappeared until 1975, when it was given to investigators of the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations. Brown does not know where the Secret Service got the photo, or what happened to it after he used it for a re-enactment photo, and to make a silhouette photo.

SILHOUETTE OF 133C —That silhouette photo—seen perhaps by only a handful of people and not at all by the Warren Commission or the House committee—is this composite found in the assassination files in the Dallas Archives. In a darkroom technique, Brown says he matted Oswald's image from 133C into a picture of the otherwise empty backyard. It was, Brown says, "my own idea." Left unanswered by the release of these photos is where the Secret Service got one more photo of Oswald than his wife said she took. Her two snapshots, and their negatives, are now in the National Archives in Washington D.C. There are no known negatives of 133C or the silhouette photo.

... and radiation treatments.

The retired Tulsa attorney coordinates the transportation program for the Tulsa chapter of the American Cancer Society

"I've been fighting cancer since 1960. I had a bad cancer on my nose. Oh, that was a bad one. Then I had one on the top of my head."

... loudly and yelled, "Mr. McKellar! It's me."

The next stops were hospitals.

After dropping off Hemphill and

me?"

Although he is obviously fond of some of the patients, Gable said he tries not to get too close to the people he drives.

... patients need. varies each day, he said. One day ... ly, 15 patients needed transportation.

"It really is rewarding work," Ga... said.

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department.

Brown says that one week to the day after Kennedy's assassination, he went with Secret Service agent Forrest Sorrels, Fritz and other law enforcement officers to a house at 214 Neely St. in the Oak Cliff section of Dallas once rented by Oswald.

It was in the back yard of this house where Oswald's wife, Marina, said she had — in March 1963 — taken two snapshots of her husband holding left-wing newspapers and the rifle the Warren Commission later identified as the Kennedy murder weapon.

Those snapshots — known as 133-A and 133-B — and their negatives were found by Dallas Police Det. Richard Stovall and other officers in the garage of the Irving home of Michael and Ruth Paine, where Marina Oswald was staying, the day following the assassination. In its 1964 investigation into Kennedy's death, the Warren Commission was told by Dallas police these were the only backyard photographs of Oswald found.

But, there was at least one more.

Brown says at the Neely Street house he was given a larger photograph — not the smaller snapshot size — of Oswald in a similar newspaper-rifle pose and told to use it for a re-enactment photo. Brown struck the pose and was photographed imitating Oswald.

Brown also photographed an empty back yard, and says that later in his police department darkroom he used the Secret Service-furnished Oswald photo to create a composite silhouette photograph by inserting Oswald's body image into the back yard.

In Brown's manipulated photo, Oswald's place is taken by a white body silhouette holding what appear to be a rifle and newspapers. The silhouette appears to be an example of matting, a darkroom technique which can serve as an intermediate step in the combining of photographic images.

Brown says he made the silhouette by cutting Oswald from the Secret Service-furnished photograph and reshooting the result. The purpose, which resulted in the matte print, was "just to show him (Oswald) in that back yard. That part was my own idea. I just did it to be doing something."

The silhouette photo housed in the Dallas Archives has not been publicly seen before now. The Secret Service-supplied Oswald photo (known now as 133-C) from which it was made disappeared i... late 1963 and was not seen again until the mid-1970s when investigators of the U.S. House Select Committee on Assassinations examined it. There are no known negatives for either photo.

Brown's re-enactment scenario, however, conflicts with evidence presented to the Warren Commission. The major discrepancy may be seen in the outline of Oswald's silhouette, or "ghost," in the matte print.

The matted portion of this print is clearly designed to accommodate only Oswald in the 133-C photo. Conforming with the silhouette, 133-C shows Oswald holding newspapers aloft in his right hand and the rifle high in his left hand at a nearly upright angle.

Dallas Police Det. Guy F. Rose, Stovall's partner in 1963, told the Warren Commission only the two snapshots (taken by Marina) and their negatives were found. That conflicts with Brown's recall of the larger third photograph.

A further conflict involves Brown himself. He says two vertical white lines on either side of the silhouette are "cut lines, where it was cut out, I guess . . ."

Instead, they could have been produced by an acetate overlay. In a typical step for creating such composite images, an acetate sheet with a cutout of the figure to be inserted — Oswald — would be placed over the picture of the empty back yard and shot with a copy camera.

This procedure, shown in Stone's *JFK*, would leave "tracks" from the edges of the overlay in the form of thin white lines similar to those in the silhouette print.

Brown's admissions clearly raise some new questions.

How, for example, did federal agents acquire the mysterious 133-C photo? And having acquired 133-C, why didn't federal or Dallas police officers turn it over to the Warren Commission? Why did it disappear between late 1963 and 1975?

Brown says he doesn't have the answers. The other principals involved can't answer, either. Fritz died in 1984 and Sorrels — who also planned the motorcade route for Kennedy's visit to Dallas and rode in the lead car — is now in a nursing home and "not in a capacity to respond," according to Secret Service spokesman Bill Birch.

But, says Hershel Womack, photo expert and major researcher of the Waggoner Carr Collection of Kennedy Materials at Texas Tech University in Lubbock, "The photographic panel of the House Select Committee on Assassinations should be reconvened. The question of whether Oswald was framed by faked photographs needs to be asked one more time."

"The fact that the matted photograph was worked from the precise backyard photo that was withheld from the Warren Commission makes me suspect that the 'ghost' photo, the withheld 133-C photo and Brown's demonstration photo may all have been part of the same trial series. Once the practice was over and the actual forgery completed, the incriminating materials were discarded — or so they thought."

Adds nationally recognized Kennedy assassination researcher Paul Hoch of Berkeley, Calif.: "The discoveries in Dallas comprise a message that there are surprises in the files, contrary to the claims of (counsel to the House committee) Robert Blakey and others. The complexity of the photograph issue points out the need for an ongoing investigative capability at least on the level of the FBI."

The FBI, however, has no interest in the silhouette photo.

The agency, says spokeswoman Marjorie Poshe of Dallas, "does not have, and does not need, the photograph."

In stark contrast to this position, the FBI's interest was sharp when it was found the Dallas police files included arrest reports of three enigmatic "tramps" picked up in the railroad yards behind Dealey Plaza, which Kennedy was traveling through when shot.

Believed to have been lost or never completed in the first place, the reports put names and ages to the disheveled trio photographed by the media as they were marched to police headquarters.

Using that information, the FBI wasted little time in finding two of the tramps earlier this year, living in Oregon and Florida. The third had died.

Pictures paint Oswald as 'patsy'?

Oswald himself, when shown the pictures at Dallas Police Headquarters after his arrest, insisted they were fakes. Through the years, many critics have argued the same thing. In part, controversy was stimulated by a 1964 Life Magazine cover of a copy of one picture, retouched to enhance its quality. If the backyard photographs are valid, they are highly incriminating of Oswald because they apparently link him with the murder weapon. If they are fakes, how they were produced poses far-reaching questions in the area of conspiracy. "Fake" backyard photographs would indicate a degree of conspiratorial sophistication that would almost necessarily raise the possibility that a highly organized group had conspired to kill the president and make Oswald a "patsy."

— House Select Committee on Assassinations, 1979

Bobby G. Brown in pose similar to Oswald photos.

of unmarked cars from the Central Patrol Division pool are not on the lot and not signed out to anyone.

Seems some clever officers found they could check a car out once, have extra keys made, and "borrow" the car anytime without signing for it.